



**Madeline
McLoughlin**

**Senior Social
Work Practitioner**

Introduce yourself. Where do you work? What is your job role?

My name is Madeline McLoughlin. I am a Senior Social Work Practitioner in a Community Mental Health Team within the Belfast Trust.

What does your job entail?

I work within a multidisciplinary team. My job role encompasses various aspects, such as assessment, care planning, and providing ongoing support for patients with serious mental illnesses. Additionally, I engage in liaison activities with other teams and agencies, including Acute Care, The PSNI, and voluntary organizations. As part of my responsibilities, I supervise other staff members, collect statistics, and serve as a Designated Adult Protection Officer (DAPO). I also oversee Mental Health Review Tribunals, Guardianship, and Deprivation of Liberty applications that fall under the purview of the team. Given my role, it is crucial for me to have a strong understanding of the legislation relevant to Northern Ireland and to confidently apply it.

How did you get into this line of work?

I worked in a pharmacy after completing my first university degree in Criminology and Social Policy. During my time there, I thoroughly enjoyed working with people, which motivated me to return to university and pursue a degree in Social Work. Coincidentally, my second placement during my Social Work degree was within the same Community Mental Health Team where I am currently employed. It became apparent to me from the very beginning that this particular area of Social Work was where I wanted to focus my career.

Outline your career to date

I graduated from my first university degree in 2014 and subsequently began working in insurance services. In 2016, I transitioned to working in a pharmacy. It was during my time there that I gained the confidence and self-belief to pursue a career in Social Work, something I had always aspired to do. Working in the pharmacy provided me with a glimpse into what a career centered around working with people would entail.

After graduating from my Social Work program in 2019, I briefly worked in Children's Services, however, I swiftly returned to the Community Mental Health Team where I had completed my placement, and I have been working there ever since. In June 2022, I applied for the position of Senior Social Work Practitioner within the team and was fortunate enough to be successful in obtaining the role.

Tell us about your qualifications and training

I initially completed a Degree in Criminology and Social Policy at Queen's University Belfast. This qualification enabled me to pursue the two-year graduate route in Social Work, also at Queen's University Belfast. After completing my Social Work degree, I undertook the assessed year in employment (AYE) to further enhance my skills and knowledge in the field. Since starting my role, I have had numerous opportunities to engage in various types of training. These include training in structural clinical management, the mental capacity act, adult safeguarding, and supervision. These training programs have allowed me to develop and expand my expertise in different areas relevant to my role.

What qualities are required for your job – personal and professional?

I feel that my job necessitates various qualities, including compassion, good time management, flexibility, strong communication skills, excellent assessment skills, the ability to prioritise tasks, and crisis intervention skills. Additionally, patience, resilience, and the willingness to acknowledge and navigate challenging situations are essential aspects of this role. Building meaningful relationships is a significant part of the job, and maintaining a person-centered approach is crucial. Advocacy skills and empathy play vital roles in supporting individuals. It is equally important to demonstrate respect and a non-judgmental attitude when working alongside individuals who are ultimately experts in their own lives.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

Do not give up; try again. I would not be in this career if I had not persevered and reapplied six years after my initial unsuccessful attempt.

Tell us an interesting fact about yourself

I applied to the Social Work Course when I was 19, but unfortunately, I was unsuccessful at that time. However, I am incredibly grateful that I did not give up and instead decided to reapply when I was 26. This determination and persistence allowed me to ultimately achieve my goal of entering the Social Work profession.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I love spending time with my family when I am not working. I have a seven-year-old daughter who keeps me busy and brings me joy. Additionally, since I am originally from Enniskillen, I also enjoy visiting there whenever I have the opportunity.

Who has inspired you most in your life?

I have been inspired by numerous individuals I have encountered throughout my life and career. It is challenging to single out one person since many people have provided me with invaluable inspiration and support along the way. Their contributions have had a significant impact on my personal and professional growth.

What advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

All of your hard work will pay off and it will all be worth it.